

OXFORD

MAGAZINE

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In this first issue of *Oxford Magazine* for an approaching academic year like no other we are introducing a number of changes in an attempt to open up our pages to involve readers more directly and in the hope of providing avenues of support in anxious times. Below we announce plans to put new editorial structures in place, for which we invite your active participation.

Experience last term—when lockdown was in force and Covid-19 seemed to be containable—and events that have followed over the summer—when Trinity term never seemed to have ended—have not quite prepared us for what we face this term. Not only is the threat of a full-scale second wave very real at this moment but a succession of government blunderings have added to the problems and confusions that affect us all.

The A-level scandal has resulted in an unplanned, sudden increase in fresher student numbers, the scale of which is still not fully clear; the possible knock-on effects are obvious, including in particular a shortage of teaching staff when recruitment is in principle frozen. Inevitable continuing uncertainties regarding foreign student

Changes ahead

numbers compound the problem, alongside the need for colleges—necessarily very much the front-line in monitoring student behaviour—to supervise quarantining on their arrival and to plan for their possible residence through the Christmas vacation. Then there is the growing pressure (from students, the UCU and the public) to promote across-the-board remote teaching. On-line and entirely new examination procedures last term have (as with A-levels) destabilized standards in the

classification of degrees and the comparability of results this year and next. As the admissions round is planned for the end of term, there is concern that on-line admissions interviews are not only onerous but sometimes of doubtful credibility; the effects on our ability to maintain standards in future cohorts of students must be open to question.

At the risk of ignoring the positives—there is every reason to think that the University's detailed forward planning will ensure that we cope successfully—it seems inevitable that the above effects of Covid-19 will create extra burdens on academics and on our administrative

Oxford Magazine publication arrangements

We are unable to publish the *Oxford Magazine* in print for the foreseeable future, as a result of COVID19-related working restrictions. Arrangements for archival copies will be made at a later date.

We will continue to publish online editions of the *Oxford Magazine* and send emails to our online subscribers. We will also send emails to our print subscribers, where we have an email address for them, so that they continue to receive the *Magazine* in an available format.

If you are a print subscriber and do not wish to receive such emails, please visit www.staffsubs.ox.ac.uk and cancel your subscription.

If you would like to set up a new email subscription, please visit www.staffsubs.ox.ac.uk if you are a current member of staff; otherwise, please email gazette@admin.ox.ac.uk.

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...and much more

and support structures. Teaching duties could double if some in the class need to be taught on-line additionally to those taught in person. And further challenges may lie ahead. Students may start to demand fee reductions. Will students heed the personal responsibility code they sign on arrival? Will colleges be able to enforce policy, if and when necessary? Will stress levels rise and will mental health services for students be adequate? Will some students opt to work from their parental homes?

* * *

A quite separate consequence of Covid-19 has been the need for Wellington Square to create an entirely new committee structure specifically directed to planning and effecting responses to the evolving emergency. Normal committees have reduced involvement and Congregation, for example, is in effect suspended since no plans have been announced regarding the conduct of meetings that, like lectures, must presumably be on-line. Above all, normal channels of internal communication and information-provision to staff are curtailed to give way for Covid-19 announcements. All the more welcome are the Vice-Chancellor's once-a-term Q&A events.

In response to the present uncertain circumstances and in order to help readers to keep well informed about developments we announce the following changes in *Oxford Magazine*.

Firstly, we are setting up an "Editorial Advisory Panel", the purpose of which is to advise on policy (e.g.

regarding coverage and authorship) for forthcoming issues of the *Magazine*. Membership may centre on Congregation members but is open to all in the University, including of course colleagues on the administrative side. A primary objective is to reach and involve the widest possible range of opinion, an aim we are particularly determined to facilitate. Our literary editor, Jane Griffiths, welcomes not just submission of poetry but also short prose contributions. If you support the free expression of opinion across the University that is the remit of the *Magazine* we ask you to contact us for further information about the EAP.

Secondly, we are opening up a new, regular column in which we offer readers the opportunity to put questions relating to aspects of University affairs that concern them. Where appropriate, answers will be sought from relevant University officers, professional services or committees. At the respondents', the EAP's and the editors' discretion questions and answers will then be published. Depending on context, the names of questioners will not be included.

Clearly, the workability of these proposals depends on the willingness of the central administration to fully engage with the scheme. We see this as a positive and constructive way of facing the future.

Please send us your questions.

B.B, T.J.H

How Tunisia Successfully Contained Covid-19

FRANCIS GHILÈS

NINE years after the revolt which put an end to the authoritarian rule of Zine el Abidine Ben Ali, Tunisia's democracy is yet to put down solid roots. Constant infighting among political parties, which makes them incapable of promoting bold economic reforms has resulted in weak economic growth and rampant corruption. Gross Domestic Product is forecast to fall by a fifth this year as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Yet, against the odds, North Africa's smallest country has weathered the health storm much better than its immediate neighbours let alone northern rim Mediterranean countries such as Spain, Italy and France, not to mention the United Kingdom.

The figures speak for themselves. As of September 1, Covid-19 had claimed 80 victims in Tunisia as against 1,184 in Morocco and 1,518 in Algeria. A total of 3,963 Tunisians have been infected compared with 45,000 Algerians and 63,781 Moroccans. Even allowing for the fact that Tunisia's population (11.8m) is between a third and a quarter of its two North African neighbours, the country's relative success at containing the pandemic deserves an explanation.

Tunisia has had 12 ministers of health since 2011 but as one senior businessman quips: "the country may be badly governed but it is administered." A huge increase in the state payroll, which has often accommodated unqualified members of the Islamist Nahda party has forced a severe cutback in state investment, led to a huge increase in public debt and severely weakened a civil service which, at the turn of the century, was the envy of the Arab world.

Beyond the youth of its population (average age 31), the virtual non-existence of old people's homes and the fact that the virus struck in winter and not summer (9m tourists visit the country every year), three factors explain why Tunisia has escaped the worst. The medical establishment was quick to sense the risks of the events unfolding at the turn of the year in Asia. The country's territorial organisation of health worked well despite the dire conditions in many hospitals, the result of budget cuts since 2011. Those leading the fight such as the director of the *Observatoire des Maladies Nouvelles et Emergentes*, Dr Nissaf Ben Alaya and the Director of basic Healthcare at the ministry of Health, Dr Amel Ben Said, are respected

professionals who are not afraid to speak their mind to politicians.

They are the true “daughters” of President Habib Bourguiba, the founding father of modern Tunisia, who in 1956 gave women rights they enjoyed nowhere in the Arab world, let alone in many European countries such as France, Italy and Spain. Women were granted equal rights except in matters of inheritance and family planning was introduced in 1961-1963. Two thirds of all doctors in Tunisia are women, who account for 80% of the intake of medical schools. Here, as elsewhere in the Arab world, seasoned observers agree that the future lies with women.

The response to Covid-19 was helped by the existence since 1883 of an *Institut Pasteur* headed by Dr Hechemi Louzir, who told me the crisis demonstrated “Tunisia’s huge human capacity to anticipate and manage health emergencies.” The *Institut Pasteur* was founded by Charles Nicolle, who was rewarded for his discoveries on typhus by the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1928. The main hospital in Tunis bears his name. As one would expect in a small country, doctors, specialists and the researchers in pharmaceutical laboratories, as well as senior civil servants and politicians, interact with ease. This country is open to the world and tolerant as befits the 2800-year-old heir to Carthage. When the Nahda leader Rachid Ghanouchi complained in August that the spike in Covid-19 last month—explained by the many Tunisians from France returning for their summer break and the rash of weddings—was due to the Islamist minister of health leaving the government, the reaction against on social media was one of derision.

A recent poll shows that the army and medical profession are the two most respected institutions in Tunisia, the deputies and ministers the most despised. Science has trumped religion which could have interesting political consequences. The army has helped the civilian authorities, notably by the use of a mobile testing unit and has helped the police enforced localised confinement wherever important clusters of Covid-19 were detected, as was the case recently in Gabes and Kairouan.

The key factor behind Tunisia’s success has turned out to be the creation, in 2008 of the *Observatoire* to track

emerging illnesses across the world. Dr Alayed sits in a crowded warren of offices on the 13th floor of a nondescript building in central Tunis. A bundle of energy, she takes time to explain to me the agreement signed with Germany in 2012 to develop bio-security (humans, animals and the environment) and the early warning flu system which the US National Centre for Disease Control in Atlanta helped set up after 2012. Fully equipped with trained personnel by 2019, it came in very handy eight months ago.

Tunisia boasts a small but thriving pharmaceutical industry and laboratories which are both public and private. It produces just over half the medicines it consumes, one of the highest in Africa. There are no “fake” pharmaceuticals here. The country produces its own Covid-19 test kits though it imports some active ingredients from abroad. Women play an important role in this sector which they are keen to develop. The CEO of *Teriak*, Sara Masmoudi and Najla Hamdi who runs the French SANOFI subsidiary are, like their peers in the medical world, typical of a new generation of energetic Tunisian managers. European leaders, not least Josep Borrell in Brussels, proclaim they want to near-shore the production of more pharmaceuticals away from Asia. They could do worse than look and Tunisia, whose economic ties with Europe are many.

Last January, the Tunisian minister of health called her French counterpart to express the concern the Tunisian medical establishment had about the news from China. “Do not panic” the French minister of health, Agnes Buszyn, told Dr Sonia Bencheikh, who was non-plussed. Tunisia’s handling of the Covid-19 pandemic suggests that being “Arab” and “Muslim” does not disqualify you from being competent. When I said as much to Dr Ben Alaya, my remarks elicited a wry smile.

Western think tanks and politicians have been lecturing Tunisians on democracy since 2011, with little noticeable effect. Maybe they should catch their breath and listen to Tunisians lecture them on public health. Having mishandled Covid-19 and inflicted huge economic and social damage on itself, and its immediate neighbours, would it be too much to ask the “old continent” to understand that the better part of valor is probably modesty?

In memoriam

I pull a face since I can’t yet embrace
My two grandchildren person-to-person.
But I need to grieve for those who can’t breathe
Due to Covid or someone’s coercion.

Their name might be Douval, Aisha or George,
Someone’s parent or sister or brother.
Oh, let it be true—this furnace might forge
A more equal regard for each other.

ROBERT GRAYSON

Robert Grayson writes a poem each week for the staff bulletin at NDORMS where he works as Graduate Studies Assistant. Previously a pastor and primary school teacher, he loves playing with words.

Not
the
Gazette

NB The *Oxford Magazine* is not an official publication of the University. It is a forum for the free expression of opinion within the University.

A Note from New York – August, 2020

MARY ANN CAWS

APART from the boarded-up-forever stores and restaurants and salons and clubs and coffee houses all up and down third avenue, and the impossibility of traveling anywhere, and the quieter streets and gathering places, you could like to think New York more peaceful than usual. On the sidewalks, people sleeping and begging, almost no one in the subways and buses, everyone – almost everyone – in masks, so that you can't tell a smile from a grimace... this is our city from which many have fled.

We haven't, since it is scarcely possible to get to France or England or indeed any place at all, so where to flee if you don't have a country home in the US, unlike many on the upper east side of the city? For years, the initials UES said nothing to me, and now they say: "many aren't here."

Museums closed, no theatres for movies or plays or concerts, so let us hope you like the person or persons you live with, or indeed yourself if that is the company. At the college I attended, Bryn Mawr, you were supposed to concentrate on making your mind a good place to wander in. I'm certainly in favor of wandering. And I loved Rebecca Sollnit's book on *Getting Lost*: that's a very good guide to it. But this is more about staying tight, alone and perhaps not indulging in aloneness, to be discussed at some point.

I used to love the gatherings around tables with congenial and chatty friends, and my two favorite books I lingered over writing the most happily were *The Modern Art Cookbook* and recently, *Creative Gatherings: Meeting Places of Modernism*. That kind of thing, composing something non-musical but foodish and thinkish and conversationish is what I long for nostalgically, more even than France, where I had spent my last sixty-six summers and some years to boot.

Oxford as 'Modern Art'

A college collage by De Chirico,
The High looks populated by Magritte
(Raindrops of people); coloured by Rousseau
Botanic Gardens dreaming green complete

The picture; framed by walls of Cotswold stone
Tourists walk outlined in the light by stark
Shades, quilted jackets and Expressionist tone
Where Giacometti figures grace a park.

But we all say to each other now, not the "Gruss Gott" of Austria or the "Hasta luego" of Spanish-speaking places or the "A plus" for "a plus tard" of the French, or the familiar and cheery "See you" or (I always hated this one) "Take it easy," but just, with an attempt at a smile over the mask, "Stay Safe."

Autumn, Ravenna

I

Sand brushes pavements as the wind
Lightly sweeps
Torn posters for the *feste* and *spettacoli*
Now faded as the memory,
But for keeps
Come tourists of a sober mind

Who skirt worn pavements, dodging cars
On the way
To tombs and churches Early Christianity
Will offer for a modest fee...
Who could say
That money should be spent in bars?

II

Mosaics and sarcophagi display
Ornaments
Of how late Roman afterlife was viewed
And if you find a naked Christ there crude
(Sentiments
You might have thought were harboured in that day),
Time changes like the seaside drift of sands,
And tourists
Scuttle through narrow streets pedestrianized,
Blown like those very grains of sand that sanitized
Suntanned wrists
Caught up in summer's braided beads and bands.

N.S. THOMPSON

N. S. Thompson has recently published two poetry pamphlets, *After War* (New Walk Editions) and *Ghost Hands* (The Melos Press).

Responding to Dissension

PETER OPPENHEIMER

ONE of the emerging by-products of COVID-19 appears to be a wider awareness of, and discontent with, the impact of bureaucracies on the functioning of British institutions. This goes for the university sector as a whole, for the Church of England, for Whitehall departments concerned with education, and doubtless other places. One has to distinguish between external bureaucracy (the impact of one organisation upon others) and internal. In the latter case, importantly, the remedy for discontent must lie mainly within the organisation itself—to consider with some care and persistence the causes of disharmony or misunderstanding and hence, even more delicate, the plausible remedies.

Oxford University in its widest sense needs to address the atmosphere of alienation and cynicism which exists, broadly speaking, between the ranks of the academic community and the central organs of administration and governance. Two points are, I hope, uncontroversial. First, it was not always thus. From my own sketchy knowledge of the University's history, and first-hand experience since the mid-1960s, the present discord is of recent making and quite unprecedented, occurring solely in the twenty-first century. Secondly, the basic cause cannot lie in malevolence, avarice or other moral infirmities of individuals. Quite apart from the intrinsic implausibility, the matter is too diffuse, and its existence too widely acknowledged and deplored. The University Council, with desperate conscientiousness, has even solicited communication from any academic who so desires; and has given time to "Self-Reviews", to see whether it or its membership could not do better, perhaps (to cite an extreme example) by seating themselves differently at or behind the table.

Common sense tells one that this is ridiculous. What needs reconsidering is not the procedures of individual committees but the overarching statutory or constitutional framework. And because the process involves vested interests and a search for consensus, it needs to be conducted, or at least initiated, not as a fringe exercise by disinterested grandees, but through regular channels of dialogue between the broad parties presently at odds with one another. This implies patience, some inventiveness and a willingness to ponder the other side's point of view.

Central administration at Oxford is the new boy on the block. For the University's first 700 years, until the mid-twentieth century, it barely existed. It came into being mainly in connection with—one could say, at the behest of—financial support from Government after World War I. Neither then nor subsequently was it controversial—an extension rather of the modest numbers of support staff existing in colleges and, increasingly, in libraries, museums and laboratories. By the century's final decade, fund-raising and research services had become important, along with estates and graduate student admissions, as well as contributions to other areas such as student welfare. In 1999 central administrative staff comprised some 600 persons, its range of activities and its size entirely the outcome of academic requirements and initiative, universally approved.

The souring of relations, while emerging and solidifying gradually, dates from the constitutional changes (the "North reforms" of 1999) which came into operation after 2000. Four elements, distinct but inter-connected in various ways, engendered the process. In no particular order:

(1) The former twin executive bodies of the University—Hebdomadal Council and the General Board of the Faculties, each with clearly defined responsibilities—were replaced. It is necessary to appreciate that the membership of both Hebdomadal Council and the General Board comprised currently active academic staff (in the case of Council, mostly Heads of House). Their University executive positions were part-time, the exception being the Vice-Chancellor who served for three years maximum and had usually been a Head of House. What was supposed to replace the two executive bodies is the single unified University Council and its layer of sub-committees. However, this is recognised to be dysfunctional, with infrequent meetings, disparate membership and overloaded agendas. Instead, the effective replacement is a string of full-time salaried senior officials—a Vice-Chancellor on a five-year or seven-year roll of office, half-a-dozen executive Pro-Vice-Chancellors, and three or four Division Heads (see 2. below). None of these existed under the previous regime. They now dominate Council and effectively pre-determine its decisions because they alone control the agenda and information sources.

(2) Faculties were assigned, or made subject, to the newly invented bureaucratic imposition of Divisions, each with its own head and personnel in the central administration. *Nomen est omen*: the change brought gratuitous inter-Divisional rivalries, including conspicuous outlay on office establishments.

(3) Divisionalisation and the removal of the General Board together signalled the disenfranchisement of faculties. Faculties were stripped of what had been their critical, "bottom-up" role in the formation of University policies. Faculty Boards had been responsible in rotation for nominating persons to the General Board—a felicitous selection mechanism from every point of view. Under General Board procedures members were expressly forbidden to act as their own faculty's advocate. Their function was to inform collective decision-making on issues of academic significance in which, however, they had no sectional or personal stake.

(4) Over less than two decades central administration staff trebled in number to nearly 2,000, making it equivalent in magnitude to a distinct, fifth Division. This has been a principal driver of overall University expansion in the twenty-first century, not least because in its wake the graduate student population needed to rise by about 5,000 to fund it. The likening to a Division

is all the more appropriate, as—in stark contrast to the pre-1999 epoch—the trebling of staff took place at the sole choosing of the central administration itself, without consultation of, let alone initiative from, the general academic community. Numerous specific episodes in the past twenty years illustrate the same contrast.

The COVID pandemic provides at once a distraction and an opportunity to tackle the constitutional shortcomings which now cloud the University's operating at-

mosphere. These structural issues explain the side-lining of Congregation as the University's sovereign assembly, as well as the centralised, "top-down" nature of to-day's University executive and policy-making. To identify remedial measures on which all can agree is a challenge. A good first step would be to establish a forum, or fora, capable of creating a genuine dialogue on present disharmonies and their statutory causes. Regrettably the pandemic provides every excuse to ignore such issues.

Reaching the readership

G.R.EVANS

'The *Reporter* and the *Oxford Gazette* are to the two universities what the *London Gazette* and the publication of Bills and Acts of Parliament are to the Government.'¹ So noted Anthony Edwards in a Discussion on the future publication of the *Cambridge Reporter* in March 2011. He could have added that this official record was complemented in the *Cambridge Reporter* by the Hansard-equivalent of that University's Parliament, namely the verbatim accounts of Cambridge's frequent Regent House Discussions. Cambridge's Discussions are printed below the 'Official Record' (which consists of 'University Notices issued by authority') in the *Reporter*.² They are to be found there with:

*'notices of non placet of Graces... notices, not authorized for inclusion in the official part, of lectures and other instruction; notices sent by Colleges; notices and reports of learned societies connected with the University; and such advertisements as the Registry may think fit to insert.'*³

The *Gazette* too is its University's Hansard as well as its organ of official record⁴ of course, but it prints Congregation's Debates as part of the official record.⁴

The *Report* under Discussion in March 2011 was on *The future of the Reporter and other publications*. The Council's Recommendation was that the *Reporter* should cease print publication and 'be made available as a digital publication only'.⁵ This was presented as a cost-cutting measure. However, it proved far from uncontroversial.

* * *

The first issue of the *Gazette* appeared on 28 January 1870, with a Preliminary Notice promising that it would be published every Tuesday in term-time and more frequently if University business demanded it. Its 'official notices' would be posted in the buttery of every college or hall and sent personally to those the Statutes required to be notified. The *Gazette* itself would also be delivered without charge to every member of Congregation. Others could order it and pay a subscription. The *Gazette* would record proposals for legislative change, and announcements of what came of them if there was a vote, with lists of lectures to be given and notices of vacancies. Advertisements could be inserted—as they still can.

This new publication was reviewed on February 5 in the *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, which announced that:

'The ancient University of Oxford, not content with keeping the whole nation well supplied with scholarship, boating sciences, and heresies, has made a venture into journalism'.

This was, it said, no 'undergraduate freak'—of which there were many at the time—but the publication of the 'Alma Mater herself'. Here 'all the world' could read 'academic utterances' which could previously only be read on notice-boards in the University and its colleges. It included 'a calendar of University doings for the coming week', with Sundays and saints' days in Gothic type. The reviewer wonders whether 'Festivals and Fasts would be so conspicuously announced' in a number for the corresponding week of January 1970. (They were not.)

The review explained that the order of the contents was always to be the same: Acts and Agenda of Convocation and those of Congregation, Professors' lectures, University examinations, Prizes, University Notices (general), College Notices, unofficial notices. Legislative activity of Convocations was recorded in Latin with commendable brevity. The reviewer would have liked something to 'relieve the business-like character of the body of the paper':

'Few could fail to be both amused and instructed by seeing some specimens of the refined irony with which the pen-and-ink battles of the Dons are carried on.'

But, he concluded, 'every Oxford man who wishes to keep himself *en rapport* with his old University' should 'make a point of seeing' the *Gazette*.⁶

* * *

The *Reporter*'s brisk beginnings were briefly summarised by Anthony Edwards:

*'When the ad hoc Syndicate on the Reporter was appointed by Grace 2 of 11 November 1875, its Report took one week to write, was published on 23 November, discussed on 25 November, and approved by Grace 12 at the Congregation of 2 December.'*⁷

Its purpose, as noted in the first edition, he continued, was to bring together for convenient reference, easily filed, all *Notices* and *Reports*. It would record any *Acta* of the past week, the agenda for the next week, and an annual index of Graces. It would publish copies of examination papers and publish 'official notices issued by various associations in existence among graduate and undergraduate members of the University'. It was also hoped that the *Reporter* would 'afford an opportunity for open discussion on all subjects fairly connected with the interests of the University', and to that end it even included a Letters page. He suggested that this 'unofficial "traffic" in the early *Reporter*.... almost embraced the complementary functions of the modern *Oxford University Gazette* and the *Oxford Magazine*'. There were even short articles, the letters column was busy, and it even included reviews.⁸ It was not until 14 January 1873 that the *Reporter* became 'official', 'Published by Authority' and not until 1912 that it was signed by the Registry, who is Editor and responsible for it as the University's historic record-keeper.⁹

Both the *Gazette* and the *Reporter* have long shed their provisions of regular space for personal contributions, with the *Oxford Magazine* and the corresponding *Cambridge Review* respectively providing a place for those a few years later.

* * *

What difference would it make to lose the print copy as proposed in 2011? In the Discussion of March 2011 another speaker voiced concerns about 'the proper maintenance of the historical record'. 'It is notoriously easy', he pointed out for 'changes to be silently made to online publications'. If it ceased to be in print it would be essential, he suggested, for the *Reporter* to be archived to record changes or corrections made to the online version. Another speaker pointed to concerns about amending the Ordinances¹⁰ to say 'Publication in the *Reporter* shall include publication on a University website'.¹¹ He foresaw problems if it was not made clear what websites this might include. What if 'proposed changes to terms of employment that have to go in the *Reporter* (because they affect Statutes and Ordinances)' were allowed to 'go on a personal web page somewhere in a .cam.ac.uk sub-domain, with no links to it'.

On 19 May the Council published a Notice¹² in response to the remarks made in this Discussion and a Grace including slight amendments was put and approved without a vote being called.¹³ So the *Reporter* did go online-only, preserving a linked print pdf copy in the traditional format.

On October 2012, after a year's trial of online-only *Reporter*, the Registry as the *Reporter*'s Editor commissioned a review, which was announced in a *Notice* in the *Reporter*. It was to look at:

'(a) the arrangements for maintaining a permanent archive of the information published in the Reporter; and (b) the effects of the change on the dissemination of information from the central administration to interested parties and members of the wider University community.'

Comments were invited and 33 were received, from bodies and individuals.¹⁴

In February 2014 the *Reporter* carried a Registry's *Notice*, to which the findings were attached as an Annex.¹⁵ Its author, Professor Ibbetson, identified it as 'the primary function of the Reporter' to 'serve as a channel of communication between the central University bodies and the members of the University'. 'To serve as a record of University business' was merely its 'secondary function'.

He had found that the online-only *Reporter* was 'not functioning wholly effectively as a channel of communication with ordinary members of the University'. Even 'very senior academics' had 'admitted, with slight embarrassment', that they did not look at the *Reporter*:

'as assiduously as they had done when they had access to a paper copy, and that they consequently felt that they were not fully carrying out their responsibilities as members of the democratic University.'

He had also found that bare email alerts were not enough to keep readers up to date and the opt-in arrangements left 'ordinary members' uninformed. He recommended that the email prompt include 'the contents page of the *Reporter*'. It now does, with blue links to all the items listed there.

The Registry recognised the importance of the:

'concern that people were now less engaged with the University's governance processes. Whilst individuals will make up their own minds on whether to read the Reporter or otherwise participate in those processes, there is a need to ensure that the Reporter's existence and role is publicized and to raise awareness of the University's governance processes generally.'

The *Review* also stressed the importance of treating the *Reporter* as 'a fixed text which is delivered electronically', with 'corrections made after initial publication are acknowledged as such in the online *Reporter*'. Problems were also arising about the consistency of the historical record with the removal of various items from the Special Numbers.

There the matter lay for some years until March 2020. Print copies of the *Gazette* have been suspended during the Covid-19 emergency, but with the stated intention that the resulting online-only *Gazettes* will be printed in due course for the archive. There has been a more significant interruption in the case of the *Reporter*, whose normal publication was suspended for months after normal governance was suspended during the Covid-19 pandemic. Discussions were suspended too.

The suspension of Discussions was announced at the beginning of Term in the *Reporter* of 16 April,¹⁶ and the requirement of the Ordinance that it be published 'at least weekly during term' began to be disregarded.¹⁷ The next issue was dated 27 May, including an 'update on temporary governance arrangements'.¹⁸ Then came two issues, on 17 June¹⁹ and 24 June²⁰, containing lists of 'decisions taken' and Graces intended to validate such 'actions and decisions',

'notwithstanding that there may be, in the case of any such action or decision, inconsistency or conflict with Ordinances and General Board Regulations, whether as described in the Notice or otherwise.'

The issue of 24 June included ten *Reports* for a Discussion, to be held unprecedentedly by email only on 7 July. It also gave notice of a Discussion on a Topic of Concern to be held on 14 July, on 'Decisions taken in response to the coronavirus (COVID 19) outbreak' (though they would already have been approved by Grace). On 29 July appeared a round-up issue with Notices in response to remarks made in the Discussion, one more *Report*, and under *Acta* publication of the approval of both sets of Graces, with the record of both Discussions.²¹ A final issue appeared on 11 August to make it possible to submit a Grace for approval of amendments to the University Composition Fees.

The issues of 17 and 24 June and the hasty Graces were prompted by the Board of Scrutiny, as its Chair explained in her speech on the Topic of Concern. She said that:

'the Board wrote to the Council's Business Committee on 23 May to raise its concerns with respect to the suspension of the publication of the Reporter and the concomitant implications for governance. The Board was concerned that whilst there had been numerous communications from the Vice-Chancellor to staff and students, there had been no account in the form of a Notice to inform the Regent House of the pertinent decisions that have been made under delegated authority and no attempt, by the publication of Graces, to obtain any retrospective authority for those decisions.'

The lack of normal legislative approval was particularly important:

'The Board noted that if the Council believed that no such Graces were needed, then Council should specify by what authority the various actions have been taken.'

The Board also urged that 'the longer the suspension of the Reporter lasted, the greater was the risk of challenge either to the process or individual decisions taken without the necessary authority'.

It requested 'an edition of the *Reporter* within two weeks, remedying the situation noted above and clearly informing the Regent House of the timetable for reverting to the University's governance procedures'. The *Reporters* of 17 and 24 June partly met that request but it remained unclear when normal governance would be restored.

Speaking long after the event she took the opportunity to 'note the discrepancy in the fact that *non* placets or amendments to the Graces would have to have been received' so far ahead of the present 'opportunity to discuss the decisions to which the Graces pertain' on 14 July.²²

There will of course be much more to be said about all this in Cambridge in due course but it is an episode which seems to reflect well on Oxford's steady continuation of publication of the *Gazette*, while opening many questions of enduring importance about the roles of both *Gazette* and *Reporter* in their universities' governance and in communication with their sovereign bodies.

The first *Gazette* of the academic year, published on 24 September, comes with a link to a new, clear and accessible précis of its contents which should go far towards helping readers to get acquainted with the *Gazette*'s full story of the University's conduct of its business.

¹ <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2010-11/weekly/6220/section12.shtml>

² I am grateful to the Editor of the *Gazette* for a helpful steer on this point.

³ In its unofficial part, the *Reporter* also includes notices by the Colleges; notices of learned societies; and advertisements of external vacancies.

⁴ Cambridge Ordinances, Chapter 1, *Statutes and Ordinances*, p.103.

⁵ <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2010-11/weekly/6217/section8.shtml#heading2-19>

⁶ *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 29 (745), 192-3.

⁷ <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2010-11/weekly/6220/section12.shtml>

⁸ <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2010-11/weekly/6220/section12.shtml>

⁹ <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2010-11/weekly/6220/section12.shtml>

¹⁰ Counterpart of Oxford's Regulations.

¹¹ Amended by Council Notice, <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2010-11/weekly/6224/section1.shtml#heading2-9>, to 'Publication in the Reporter shall include publication on the Reporter website (<https://www.reporter.admin.cam.ac.uk/>).'; Cambridge Ordinances, Chapter 1, *Statutes and Ordinances*, p.103.

¹² <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2010-11/weekly/6224/section1.shtml#heading2-9>

¹³ <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2010-11/weekly/6227/section10.shtml#heading2-22>

¹⁴ <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2012-13/weekly/6281/section1.shtml#heading2-5>

¹⁵ <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2013-14/weekly/6337/section1.shtml#heading4-1>

¹⁶ <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2019-20/weekly/6583>

¹⁷ Cambridge Ordinances, Chapter 1, *Statutes and Ordinances*, p.103.

¹⁸ <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2019-20/weekly/6584/>

¹⁹ <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2019-20/weekly/6585/>

²⁰ <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2019-20/weekly/6586/>

²¹ <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2019-20/weekly/6587/>

²² <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2019-20/weekly/6587/section7.shtml#heading2-35>

The next issue of
Oxford Magazine
will appear in
second week

The Universities Superannuation Scheme – Asset or Liability?

RORY KNIGHT

CURRENTLY, UK universities are reeling in the face of a trio of threats—all of them Covid-related:

1. The precipitous decline in foreign student fees will adversely affect cash flows as universities enjoy the highest profit margins from this set of students.
2. The move to on-line course delivery is creating a not unreasonable demand for lower fees.
3. Students are calling for reimbursement of rentals for vacated accommodation.

The Universities Superannuation Scheme's (USS) 2020 *Annual Report* provides another hammer blow to the sector's finances in the form of a funding deficit of over £12 billion which reflects an increase of close to 240% over last year, chiefly due to the lockdown's impact on the economy. The USS warned in a memorandum of 7 September that the deficit may be as much as £17.9 billion. In the absence of a radical policy change the lockdown-induced USS funding deficit will have a long-lasting negative impact on the participating universities and contributing members to the scheme.

Moreover, changes in the composition of USS membership do not appear to auger well for the scheme. Figure 1 shows the changes in various member categories between March 2010 and March 2020. The aggregate membership has grown from 277,000 to 459,713—an increase of 66% for the decade. However, it will be noticed that more than 50% of the additional 182,713

members are deferred pension members which now number 180,352 and constitute 39% of the membership, up from 30% in 2010. These are members that have left the scheme who neither contribute nor withdraw funds currently but who are entitled to a pension in the future.

During the decade the scheme in pursuit of managing the deficit has placed considerable burdens on the contributors in the form of cash and reduced benefits which has had an inter-generational wealth shift from young to old. Not surprisingly there has been some resistance manifesting in strike action by university lecturers during the decade. It has been a £3 billion struggle, a number which will be a recurring theme.

The spectre of university bankruptcy

The Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) recently published a paper (*Will universities need a bail out to survive the Covid-19 crisis?*) which provides a detailed study on the impact of the crisis on university finances. The main conclusion is that as many as thirteen UK universities are at risk of bankruptcy. Although all universities are expected to be adversely affected, the impact is unlikely to be uniform. The collective long-run losses are estimated to be anywhere between £3 billion and £19 billion. It should be pointed out that there are significant consequences of thirteen bankruptcies for the surviving universities which will be required to absorb the pension liabilities of the fallen. The USS is a pooled scheme

FIGURE 1. Changes in USS membership

SOURCE: USS Annual reports

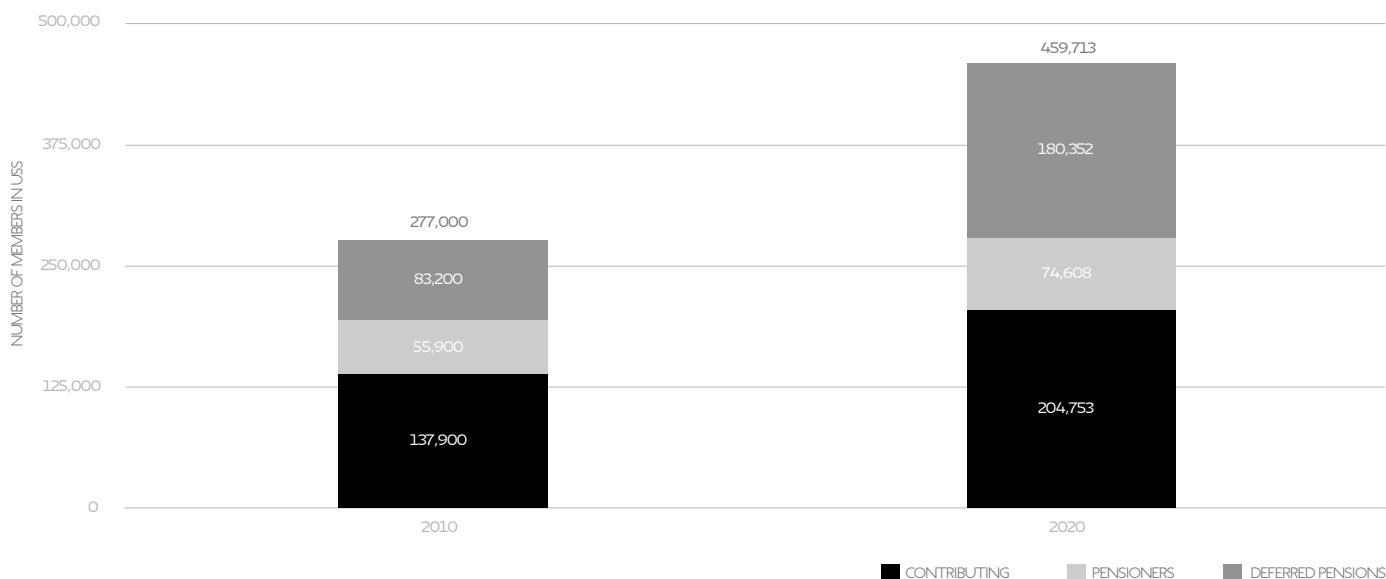
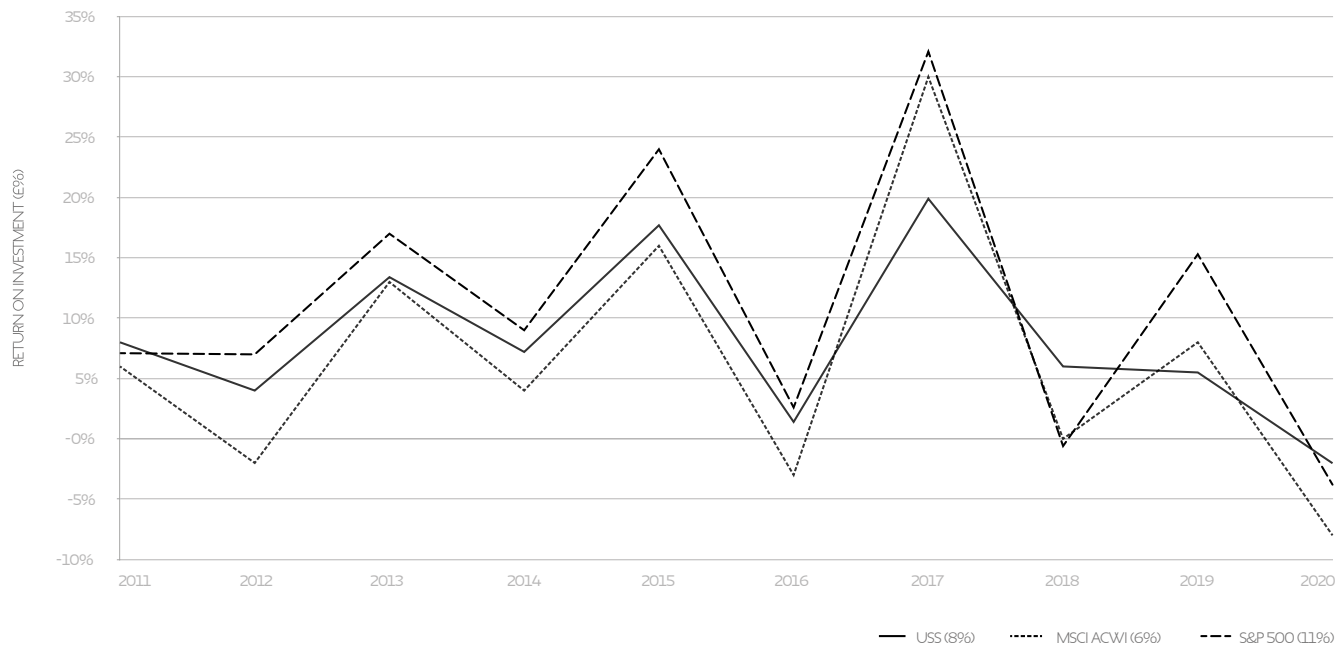


FIGURE 2. USS investment performance

SOURCE: Oxford Metrics



with a collective liability on a “last man standing” principle, which means the increasing deficit will be shared among fewer institutions. The IFS paper makes the case for a government intervention with a bailout as one of the policy options, and Universities UK is seeking a bailout package of close to £3 billion (in fees and research) which to date has been resisted by government.

But is the USS balance sheet really so unhealthy?

In fact a ten-year view reveals the USS is actually in rude financial health. The scheme has enjoyed a *per capita* asset value increase of around 50% over the decade. The USS annual accounts report that the balance sheet asset values have grown from approximately £30 billion in 2010 to over £67 billion at 31 March 2020, which implies an increase in per capita asset value from £109,000 to £150,000. An indication that the average pension value grew at an average rate of 3.2% per annum.

Most of the growth has come from investment returns. However a staggering £3 billion (including investment returns thereon) of this amount has been extracted from contributing institutions and members during the last ten years. The scheme comfortably finances funds paid to pensioned members with funds received from contributing members and institutions. Clearly the scheme is able to be self-funding without drawing on reserves. However the nature of a defined benefit scheme under the 2004 Pensions Act requires full funding—a gold-plated approach which will be discussed later.

An alternative to bailout

Bailouts are problematic because those not enjoying the direct benefits of education are effectively taxed

(although the case for the indirect benefits is strong). Another intractable problem associated with a bailout is moral hazard, whereby universities would be inclined to behave in the same way we observe with bank bailouts – taking excessive financial risk in the expectation that failure will be resolved by government.

The USS may provide the perfect vehicle to manage a long-term financial relief package for the university sector. It is uniquely the institution where all universities have an aligned interest that would avoid the moral hazard trap. Conveniently, the USS has the required £3 billion on its balance sheet, which is the excess cash flow over the last ten years: this could be reinvested in the universities. A financial instrument, disciplined but long-term in nature might provide the critical relief currently required. Currently the USS has £4.5 billion invested in nominal government bonds which could be redirected to universities. Ensuring the survival of thirteen universities at a time of national crisis is surely worth rethinking the regulation of the USS.

A new investment policy also needed?

In the same way that the spectre of the deficit has influenced the management of the flow of funds between the scheme and members it has also influenced investment policy and performance. The performance is reported in Table 1 (appended below) and contrasted with two other internationally accepted benchmarks in Figure 2. Overall, returns have been healthy and average 8% for the decade which compares favourably with the performance of world equity markets for the same interval. Bearing in mind that the annual data are measured at the end of March the performance reflects the negative impact of the first quarter of 2020 which was the worst quarter in the decade due to the global lockdown. USS performance of 8% falls between that of the S&P500 (large US companies) with an 11% p.a. average and the

MSCI ACWI (global equity index) with a 6% p.a. average return. USS performance is especially good as it exhibits a lower volatility than the two other benchmarks. This is not surprising since more than 40% of the portfolio is invested in lower risk fixed income securities.

As shown in Figure 3, there have been three major changes in investment policy over the last decade:

1. The allocation to equities has fallen dramatically from 70% at the start of the decade to 38% currently. It has been a very good decade for equity markets as reflected in the S&P index and there may well have been opportunities missed in hindsight. Furthermore, there has been a significant reduction in UK equities specifically, which are now only 10% of the portfolio. The reduction in foreign equities means that the benefits of investing outside the pound during a decade when the currency lost 23% of its value against the dollar will have weighed down returns further. The scheme does continue to have significant investment exposure internationally in other asset classes.

2. As equities have been reduced, the allocation to fixed income securities has risen from a mere 10% at the start to 42% currently. The effect of this has been to reduce the risk of the portfolio and dampen the variance in returns despite constraining the return potential.

3. The scheme continues to invest in private equity to offset the lower returns in fixed income. It should be noted that there appears to be a zero cash holding after 2016 in Figure 2, this is because there has been a net negative allocation to cash since 2016 not reflected in the chart. The extent of this leverage or shorting of the portfolio is now at a 12%, this reveals that a certain degree of risk hedging is being undertaken.

In summary, the scheme appears to be managing a

well-balanced portfolio which it reports costs around 39 basis points per annum. While this seems reasonable in aggregate it is likely that the passive components are cross-subsidising the more expensive active private equity components. Furthermore, the costs do not reflect the carried interest expense common with private equity investments. Finally, it is worth mentioning that the private equity investments are likely to be much less liquid than listed investments.

New investment philosophies

This approach considerably restricts opportunities. Whilst the scheme appears to be well managed it reflects a particular investment philosophy which is being challenged by many. The alternative would be to invest passively at almost no cost. For example, investing in well diversified funds would obviate the need for any investment overhead costs and allow the scheme to follow a more focussed approach to responsible investing.

There is no doubt that USS takes responsible investing seriously and their Responsible Investing Report of 2018 reflects the policies and actions they are taking. A forthcoming report to be published by Oxford Metrica (*Responsible Investing by US Foundations: Perspectives, Policies and Practices*) on the responsible investing practices of US foundations suggests that the USS is very much in line with institutional practice in this area. In June 2020 the scheme announced plans to avoid investments in tobacco, thermal coal mining and certain munitions manufacturers. It expects to be able to implement this policy within two years. A passive investment strategy might allow a more flexible and tailored responsible investing policy. Environmental Social & Governance (ESG) funds offer a possible and appropriate alternative.

FIGURE 3. USS asset allocation

SOURCE: USS Annual reports

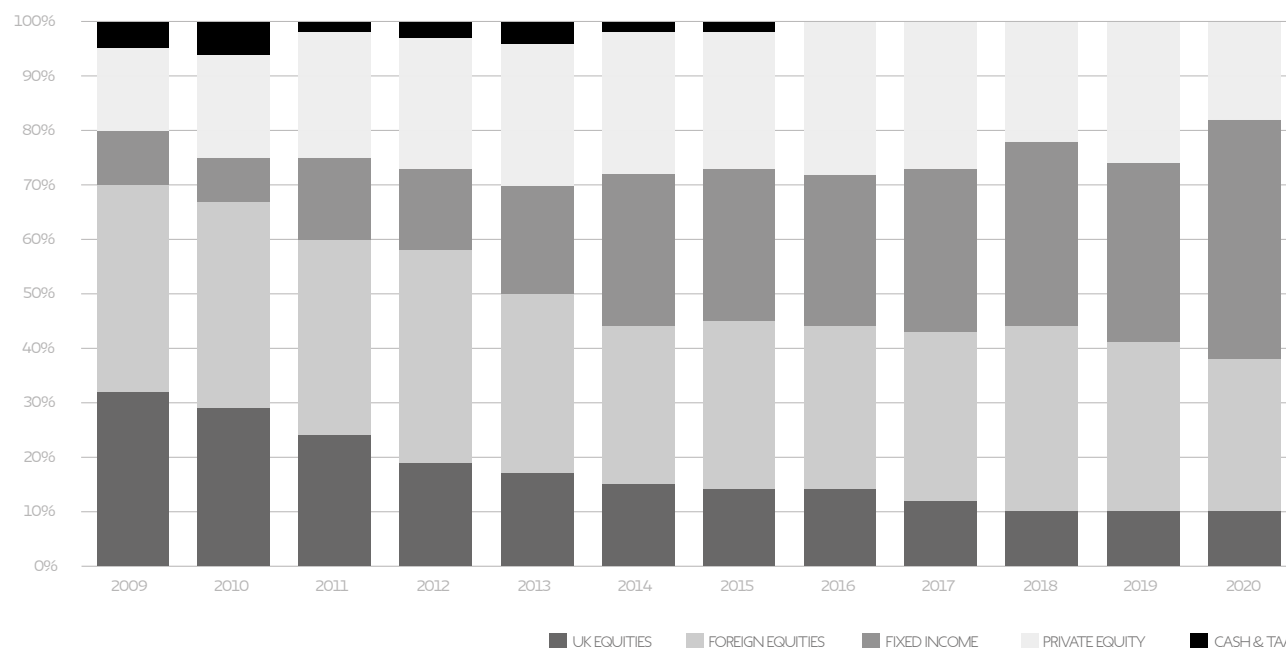
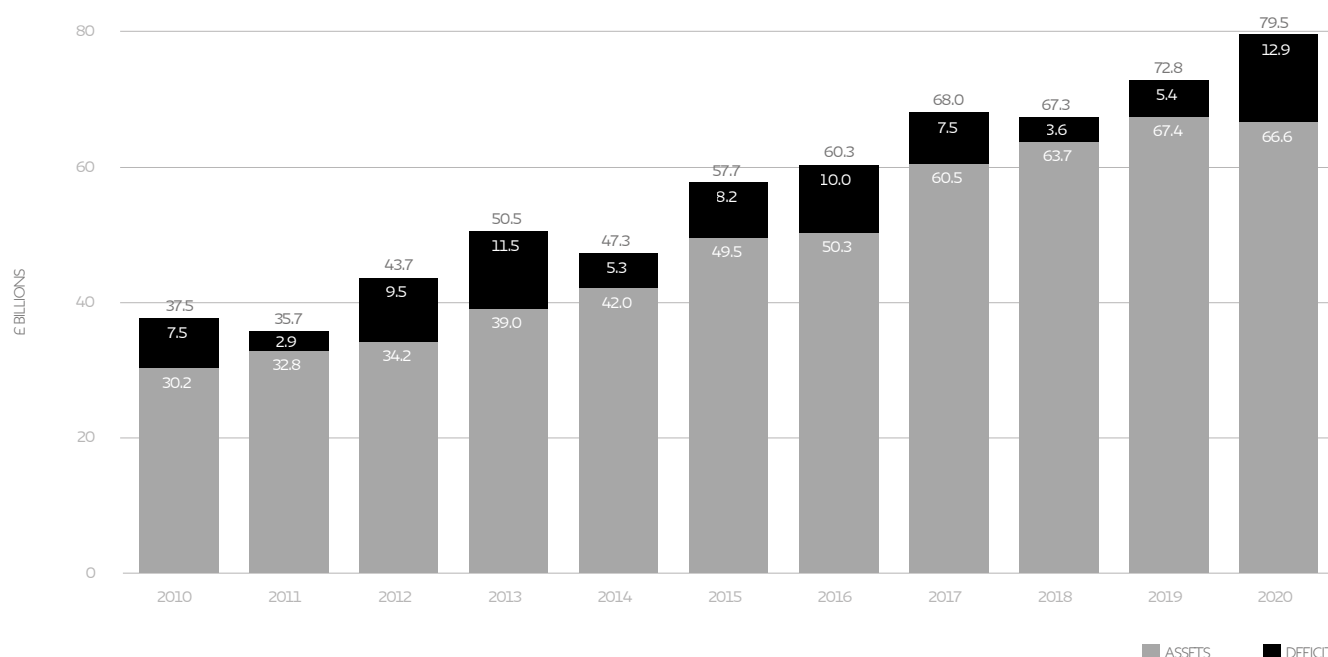


FIGURE 4. The evolution of the USS actuarial liability

SOURCE: USS actuarial & annual reports



The fallacy of gold-plating

Figure 4 shows the evolution of the scheme since March 2010 broken down into assets and deficits. Although the scale of the deficit is at its highest level at close to £13 billion, is this figure very meaningful? Kay and King (2018) (*USS crisis: can the pension system be resolved*) eloquently point out “the 2004 Pensions Act is an example of well-intentioned but inept financial regulation”. It demands that any scheme should be ready to close down at any moment while meeting its obligations with certainty. This hypothetical construct has led to defined benefit schemes becoming almost extinct in the UK having the exact opposite effect than intended. The regulation imposes an extreme level of risk aversion. The purpose was to protect pension fund members from any risk that they would not receive their defined benefits. Such an onerous requirement on trustees is almost impossible to achieve, and has proven so costly in most cases that the new generation can no longer enjoy a defined benefits pension.

Alternatively, if the scheme were to be unshackled from the technical requirements a more reasonable approach based on careful cash flow forecasting over a reasonable horizon could be deployed. This would be far less costly and still provide a reasonable likelihood of meeting future obligations. The price of certainty may be too high. During the last decade the scheme has demonstrated an ability to meet comfortably its liabilities and deliver an acceptable return on adequate reserves to meet its obligation with a reasonable likelihood.

In Conclusion

The cost of the present structure has contributed to the financial crisis at UK universities. It would be ironic if the quest for gold-plated, risk-free pensions undermined the livelihood of the membership.

This analysis suggests that the funding deficit is affecting the terms on which the scheme contracts with participating parties and how it approaches investment. Instead of the well-intentioned regulation of the scheme the finances might be managed quite differently and arguably with better outcomes. If the current lockdown induced crisis is not a significant enough event to reconsider the current arrangements, it is hard to envisage another set of circumstances under which the regulation of the USS could be so constructively challenged.

In a press release of 7 September 2020 the USS warned that employer contributions to restore the deficit could range from 40.8% to 67.9% of the payroll cost. The share of the burden that might have to be borne in the wage packets of individual employees could, of course, be comparable in scale. You have been warned.

TABLE 1. Summary data

SOURCE: USS Reports

Summary data		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Financial statement based											
Net inflows from contributors (£m)		157	129	182	198	99	28	284	251	217	613
Net ROI (£m)		2,424	1,327	4,583	2,818	7,434	702	9,985	3,660	3,782	-1,385
ROI %		8.0%	4.0%	13.4%	7.2%	17.7%	1.4%	19.9%	6.0%	5.9%	-2.0%
Actuarial report based	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Liabilities (£bn)	37.7	35.7	43.7	50.5	47.3	57.7	60.3	68	67.3	72.8	79.5
Assets (£bn)	30.2	32.8	34.2	39	42	49.5	50.3	60.5	63.7	67.4	66.6
Deficit (£bn)	7.5	2.9	9.5	11.5	5.3	8.2	10	7.5	3.6	5.4	12.9
Funding %	80.1%	91.9%	78.3%	77.2%	88.8%	85.8%	83.4%	89.0%	94.7%	92.6%	83.8%

The Plague of Athens

430–427 BCE

i. The Death of Pericles

An autumn's equinox, the night air hot and still,
 a full moon, high above the rooftops, trees and streets,
 shapes out a chalk-pale palimpsest of mythic time:
 the marble columns of a temple built on rock,
 a rugged coast, the silence of a calm and silvered sea.

The sad-eyed drinkers in a bar have staggered home,
 the sage who'd argued Eros off his ivied plinth
 and broached a woman seer's take, that love's desire
 torments the soul until it seeks transcendent truth,
 ponders the glisten of a snail-track on a shadowed wall.

Hush now, this is sleep's pause, the waking hour
 when thoughts and dreams, as if uplifted by the swells,
 the pulse and heave of shoreward surging swells,
 glimmer a midnight city in a cove of rocks,
 then dark out in the mind-brain's earth-whirled sea.

Look, isn't that grunting night-gown on a bed
 a temple clerk, totting up wages, grants and fees,
 the unpaid levies of a league of sea-edged states?
 And there, a pearl-pale murmuring still half asleep,
 isn't that lithe Aspasia crafting a phrase for Pericles?

I wouldn't be a wandering Orpheus of the internet,
 a fan of rhythmic Homer's word-strung lyre,
 were I to hide behind a screen of slatted prose
 the quiet radiance of the moonlight in that room,
 the unseen resonance that brings to life a dream, a song.

Here then's a gleam of leather armour by a bed,
 the rippled ivory of a tousled linen sheet,
 an inked reed-nib, a black and ochre water jug
 around whose clay gymnasium dim figures run,
 and on a sill, the moonlit frame and string-set of a harp.

Hush now and let this be, for Pericles has stirred,
 the sweat-gleamed torso on the bed, the orator,
 the energising nexus of a politics, a fleet,
 public works, art, a hundred city states has coughed,
 and sitting up, Aspasia has shrieked, *Oh no, not more!*

Water! he gasps, *my head's on fire, my body burns!*

He yanks the sheet aside, shudders, twists over
 then retches a foul-smelling vomit on the tiles,
 foul as the rotting kelp and fish strewn on a beach
 after a storm has roiled and moiled the silt-beds of a shore.

Aspasia kneeling helps him roll back onto the bed.

Don't touch! he yells, swears, gabbles gibberish, slumps,
 his face livid, his breath foetid, his eyes blood-red and dulled
 as if a tide had turned the plankton-seethe of plans
 inside his soldier-statesman's brain into a bruise-red sludge.

Aspasia kneels and helps him roll back on the bed
 and rouse the watchman dozing on the city walls,
 bring into frame her hands as she wipes clean his face,
 strokes shut his staring eyes then places on his tongue
 a coin for his migration to that substrate of space-time,

the hum of energy that holograms the underworld.

ii. The Anniversary

O Pericles, you'd hate to see great Athens now,
the streets empty, the best physicians dead,
the marketplace a morgue of shuttered stalls.

It's three years on, the clouds beyond the sill
scud slowly past the moon like refugees
shouldering sacks and trudging to oblivion.

Down at the docks, the quays are desolate,
the wine for Syria sours in the heat
and weevils waste the sheds of Egypt's grain.

The city's refuse carts stand in their yard,
there's sewage, rats and flies in every square
and beds and bodies smouldering on pyres.

It's all so hideous, and so terrifying!
Your aunt before she died told visitors
the cause is in the very air we breathe,

the foul miasma that the swamps and mist,
the stick-and-canvas hovels of the poor,
the surly slaves and immigrants exhaled.

'Not so,' that playwright friend of yours replied,
'It's punishment—Athenians have become
so rich and arrogant they've made the gods

the gilded conscripts of their own desires.
Beware the messenger, the Proteus-imp
which stalks with death the hubris of mankind.'

He's wrong, he never understood how much
recovery from conquest was your mount
and people's votes, not luxury, your spur.

I watched you snub the banquets and the bribes
and richly fund the warships and the city walls,
the athletes, scholars, singers, roads and drains—

not just that bronze colossus on a hill
flaunting a spear higher than the temple
in which her ivory double's robed in gold.

Ah Pericles, what of Athena now?
This thing is back, it paused and now it's back
more pitiless, more ravenous than before.

What of the stern-eyed, jewelled paragon
of warfare's triumph when there's such hunger,
such chaos and despair in Athens now?

Whispering at the door, the scarf-wrapped heads
back off when I get up and slowly creep
towards the harp still on our sill's dim shrine.

Oh, Pericles, it's three years on tonight,
I find it hard to weep, still can't believe
I'll never hold you in my arms again

or see you on a platform shape in speech
the vision of the Athens that you sought
or walk with sculptors round the building sites.

How much I wish I were Penelope
who knew her mariner would turn for home!
But let the harp you loved replace her loom.

You said to me Pythagoras had proved
geometry's in the humming of a string
and music in the space between the spheres.

So let me lean across the shadowed sill,
my taut-strung craft in both my hands,
and turn from silent marble on a rock

towards the distant glimmer of the sea
and throb by throb, fly out into the night
a love-song like a bird in search of you.

Oh, Pericles, can't you, don't you hear me?
What's life if there's no love, what's love
without a wisdom greater than the self?

Grim tyrants may restore their grip of iron,
rampaging Spartans burn the marketplace,
barbarians leave the Parthenon in ruins

but there's a permanence in love's desire
as strange and lovely as a throbbing string.
Oh Pericles, can't you, don't you hear me?

CHRIS MANN

Chris Mann, a former Newdigate prize winner while a Rhodes scholar at SEH (1972), worked on his return to South Africa for many years in poverty alleviation projects among Zulu-speaking people. The founder of Wordfest South Africa, a national multi-lingual festival of literature, he is currently Emeritus Professor of Poetry at Rhodes University. www.chrismann.co.za

NOTICE

Jane Griffiths, literary editor of the *Oxford Magazine*, will be pleased to read literary submissions of any description—e.g. verse, critical prose, very short stories, segments of dialogue, reviews of new dramatic productions and books, etc. Submissions should be no longer than 750 words, and where possible should be sent by email attachment to jane.griffiths@ell.ox.ac.uk together with a two-sentence biog.

The Women's Colleges and the Beginnings of Women's Sports

A.D. HARVEY

WHATEVER their self-image, university students (including of course Oxford and Cambridge undergraduates) have not usually been trend-setters in fashion, so the lead the women's colleges gave to the establishment of competitive sports for women is worth noting. Girton College Cambridge was opened in 1869, Newnham in 1871, and pairs of doubles from the two colleges competed in lawn tennis in 1878, the year Lady Margaret Hall was opened. The lawn tennis match between women's teams from Oxford and Cambridge, played on a private court in Essex in 1883, was probably the first ever match to involve organized women's teams from different localities. Hockey was being played by women at Oxford, with a string ball, in 1885, two years before the establishment of the earliest recorded women's club (Molesey Ladies Hockey Club). Girton Hockey Club was formed in 1890 and played Newnham in 1892; the first Oxford v. Cambridge ladies hockey match was in March 1894.

Earlier in the nineteenth century energetic exercise was regarded as harmful for young women. 'Leaping might still be more dangerous than running, under many circumstances peculiar to their sex,' claimed one (male) expert in 1836. As for battledore and shuttlecock, the forerunner of Badminton, 'It is a one-handed game, in which the right hand will always be preferred, and it is therefore peculiarly objectionable to for young ladies, as ensuring that one-sidedness which is the cause of so much mischief.' The same author favoured exercise with Indian Clubs, though these only became popular twenty years later. Walking was also acceptable, going up and down stairs ten times without talking being an expedient adopted in rainy weather at some girls' boarding schools, and there was some interest in gymnastics, of a very decorous kind, and drilling to music.

Although St Leonards School has the distinction of introducing ladies' lacrosse to Britain in 1890 (the headmistress had seen men playing in Canada), girls' schools generally lagged behind the women's colleges at Oxford and Cambridge. South Hampstead High School had in-school tennis and fives tournaments in the late 1880s, and had also played Notting Hill High School at tennis, and in 1895 more than twenty of the girls, together with four mistresses and five former pupils, formed a hockey club. Only two of the girls and one of the mistresses had ever played before, and the November 1898 issue of the school magazine noted that, 'We badly need more members for our Hockey Club; although last year was our fourth season, the School does not yet seem to take up the game very enthusiastically.' Things may have been only slightly better at Wycombe Abbey, where 'the game was keenly taken up—partly, perhaps, because taking violent exercise was the only means of keeping warm during the intense cold.' A number of girls' high schools formed a Hockey Union in 1896 but the first two hockey matches played by a team from Oxford High School were not till February 1898,

and one of these was against Somerville College's Second XI. (The fact that Somerville, with fewer than eighty junior members, even had a Second XI indicates the greater interest in the sport amongst undergraduates.)

One obstacle to the popularity of hockey was that parents allegedly 'disapproved of it as "advanced" and productive of ungraceful carriage.' At Cheltenham Ladies College there were interhouse hockey matches in 1906 and two matches against Old Girls, and one against East Gloucester Hockey Club, but 'No games are played against other schools, as strain and excitement are guarded against.' Cheltenham's first matches against other schools seem not to have been till 1914: there was also a match against a Somerville XI in that year.

Competitive sports made a significant contribution to changes in the image—perhaps more importantly the *self*-image—of young women in the era of 'The New Woman'. Undergraduates at women's colleges may have contributed to changing perceptions of the physical attributes of womanhood in other ways too. For much of the nineteenth century the ideal of female beauty emphasized softness and curvaceousness but during the 1880s and 1890s one begins to detect an association of intellectual and spiritual qualities with slimness. In Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895) Arabella Donn, who 'had a round and prominent bosom' and 'was a complete and substantial animal', provides a contrast with the intellectual Sue Bridehead, who 'was not a large figure she was light and slight, of the type dubbed elegant... There was nothing statuesque in her.' In the earliest published novel describing the life of women undergraduates from first-hand experience, *A Newnham Friendship* (1901), by Alice Stronach, who was at Newnham 1887-8, Betty Leslie's college room is decorated with 'autotype reproductions' of 'Watts, Burne-Jones and Rossetti, the artists most in fashion at Newnham in the eighties.' Reproductions of the same artists adorned the room of Miss Heydinger, a student at the Normal School of Science in South Kensington, in H.G.Wells's *Love and Mr Lewisham* (1900). Presumably the pictures included ones for which athletic-looking models like Elizabeth Siddal and Jane Morris had posed.

An important part of what one might call the ideology of the women's colleges at Oxford and Cambridge during their first thirty or forty years was that their key role was to prepare young women for careers, at a time when careers for women were still a contentious novelty. The colleges were very emphatically not intended to provide young ladies with opportunities to meet prospective husbands, despite the impression given by novels written by women who had not been undergraduates, such as L.T. Meade's *A Sweet Girl Graduate* and Frances Marshall's *The Junior Dean* (both first published in 1891). Amongst the careers open to women was of course school teach-

ing. It is impossible to say now how many of the young women from Oxford and Cambridge who moved on to posts in girls' schools had been members of college teams and had become promoters of competitive sports at the schools where they found employment. Nevertheless, whereas members of college sports teams—with the possible exception of boat crews—are nowadays always for-

mer members of school teams, this was not the case with college women in the later nineteenth century: if there was any movement at all with regard to sporting activities between women's colleges and girls' schools (mostly founded in the same period) it would have been from the colleges to the schools.

Different this side of the Pond?

DAVID PALFREYMAN

In a trenchant tirade Carnevale et al from the Centre on Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University methodically take apart US HE—‘*The Merit Myth: How our colleges favour the rich and divide America*’ (The New Press, 2020); while Crow & Debars of Arizona State University (who would agree with much of the Carnevale critique of broken HE in America) tell us how to put it back together—‘*The Fifth Wave: The evolution of American higher education*’ (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020).

The former expose HE admissions as what they call ‘The Sorting Machine’ that, they assert, loads ‘the Odds’ against the bulk of young Americans while cynically promoting a message of ‘Going to College’ as part of the American Dream (more like Myth) of social mobility. And at the same time it tips the admissions scale firmly in favour of the privileged—and wealthy parents, as if that ‘thumb on the scale’ was not already enough, sometimes even resort to criminal activity as in the recent bribery scandal that has seen fifty or so charged and most convicted.

The admissions mechanism, seemingly, builds in bias against the many and in favour of the few at every stage—perpetuating and indeed reinforcing America’s deeply unequal society as so riven in racial and socio-economic terms. A neatly stratified and steep hierarchy of HE institutions reflects the social pyramid and so the rich get a vastly over-funded and hugely wasteful elite experience while the poor are fobbed off with an under-funded and inefficient norm, the process propelling the children of the wealthy along smooth tracks from the posh prep school via the posh college to the posh grad school and so into the lucrative professions—although the kids of academics working at these institutions also get in via the back-door of fiddled entry standards.

Those who make it tell themselves it was all because of their personal merit and that the American Dream is doing so efficiently its sifting and mobility job. The elite universities and colleges cash the tuition fee cheques and bank the family/alumni donations—while muttering about their quest for selecting ‘only the best’ and their mission to contribute to the social mobility of the Dream, and while fixing the selection mechanism to get just the right answer.

Can it go on? Does it matter? Who cares? Carnevale et al respond: No; Yes; We all should for HE hyper-selectivity and gross stratification is not compatible with social

mobility for these elite colleges as bastions of wealth and privilege simply perpetuate inequality. Moreover, as the American middle-class steadily loses out in ‘The Sorting Machine’ the once widespread political support for HE withers—and general political instability increases, class division widens, racial segregation grows.

So what is to be done about this allegedly deeply dysfunctional mess called American HE? Compel HE once again ‘to focus more squarely on the common good...toppling the fetish of selectivity... that locks in the race- and class-based disparities...’. And, *inter alia*: ‘tax wealthy colleges’ endowments; shift resources from posh universities to community colleges [here on this side of the Pond the Augar Report, perhaps now emerging from the policy long grass in the context of the financial crisis for universities caused by Covid, proposes exactly the same shift from HE to FE]; widen student opportunity and choice; end the obsession with the SAT & ACT; ‘halt legacy admissions’; force colleges to admit a minimum percentage of low-income students; redirect financial aid; and so on. Thus, the book ends with thirty pages of prescribed actions designed to make American HE great again as part of a ‘republic of education’ in order to avoid the grave risk for America of ‘ceasing to be a republic at all’.

Turning to Crow & Debars: the diagnosis is similar, the prognosis much the same, the prescription and treatment equally radical and aggressive. The dust-jacket tells us that: ‘Sadly, admissions practices that flatly exclude the majority of academically qualified applicants are now the norm in our leading universities, both public and private.’... [the authors] argue that colleges and universities need to be comprehensively redesigned in order to educate millions of more qualified students... What must emerge are institutions that are responsive to the needs of students, focused on access, embedded in their regions... [as a] league of colleges and universities that aspires to accelerate positive social outcomes... [and is] dedicated to the advancement of a demographic that is representative of the socioeconomic and intellectual diversity of our nation...’.

So, should Harvard, Stanford, et al be scared? Are we at last on the edge of the ‘disruptive innovation’ that for decades had supposedly been about to hit HE? A process of change accelerated by the effects of coping with the Covid global pandemic? Or will this ‘Fifth Wave’ just break

against the the Ivory Tower and just become a lot of froth? How powerful is this Wave? Could it cross the Atlantic?

Crow & Dabars see these Fifth Wave universities as building ‘most proximately on the foundations of the New American University model operationalised at Arizona State University’ – Crow & Dabars, *‘Designing the New American University’* (TJHUP, 2015). The First Wave was that of the colonial colleges (Harvard, 1636 through to Dartmouth, 1769); the Second Wave was the state-chartered public institutions (such as Georgia in 1785 and Virginia by 1819). The Third Wave comes with the land-grants from the 1860s; and the Forth Wave is classically John Hopkins (1876 – but also Stanford and Chicago) as ‘the prototype for the American research university’ as ‘a hybrid of the British and German academic models’ and into which most of the earlier institutions morphed.

The emerging Fifth Wave universities are a ‘League of National Service Universities’ that will ‘Reinvigorate the Social Contract Implicit in Public Higher Education’ – with the authors’ very own ASU as ‘A Prototype for a Fifth Wave University’ (a quarter of the c425 pages are on ASU). The book is well-referenced and hence their FWUs are likened to the models conjured up by other HE pundits – the SRUs (Super Research Universities) and the those fitting the EGM (Emerging Global Model). I lost the plot in a section entitled: ‘The Fifth Wave Anticipates the Sixth Wave’ which, I think, is what some call the 3GU (Third-Generation University – first, the medieval model; then, second, the Humboldt model...): or it may be that the FWUs are some blend of the 3GUs and the SRUs as the EGM.

Anyway the Fifth Wave ‘Comprises Complex Adaptive Knowledge Enterprises’ while it ‘Strives for Sociotechnical Integration’ – and, above all, it moves us all on from the current state where ‘Inertia and Isomorphism Impede Institutional Innovation’ and takes us ‘Toward Frameworks for Universal Learning’ for the C21: ‘Frameworks for universal learning will permit individuals, regardless of their socioeconomic status or life situation, to gain the knowledge and skills to thrive and be empowered to freely

shape their own intellectual development and self-determined creative and professional pursuits.’ The FWUs will ‘seek to serve any learner from any socioeconomic background at any stage of work and learning through broad accessibility to world-class knowledge production’. A FW disruptive innovation coming Oxford’s way via the Atlantic, the Chanel, and up the Thames to the Isis?

The same scathing attack on legacy admissions is set out on pp109-115 within a chapter on ‘Opportunity Hoarding’ in the punchy wide-ranging critique by Richard V. Reeves, *‘Dream Hoarders – How the American Upper Middle Class is leaving everyone else in the dust, Why that is a Problem, and What to do about it’* (2018, Brookings Institution Press). There are several ‘affirmative action’ scams for the rich operated by the likes of Harvard, Yale, Princeton – ‘early decisions’, ‘legacy candidates’, and ‘Z-lists’. And the liberal, Democrat-voting US Upper Middle Class (top 20%) can’t see why Reeves makes such a fuss about it all. The legacy skewing in admissions arises where parents are alumni and better still donors – and the weight of the thumb on the scale may amount to as much as 10% in the SAT score (as if Oxbridge colleges automatically let in the children of Old Members with, say, BBB rather than the standard AAA), and with such as Georgetown and Stanford taking legacy candidates at more than twice the standard admission rate. The Z-list is ‘a loophole within a loophole’ – agree to defer for a year, waiting patiently on the Z-list, and, lo, the offspring of the alumni eventually pop up as students at Ivy League Universities XYZ.

The fact that Reeves is a Brit, albeit now with American citizenship, means that, unlike most academics writing on US HE, he is aware that some sort of HE goes on beyond the USA and so he duly notes that at Oxford (his alma mater) and Cambridge ‘the remaining vestiges of the [legacy status] practice were swept away in the middle of the twentieth century’ – perhaps if they had not, the Endowment of each university would be rather higher than the current c\$10b and a tad closer to Harvard’s \$35b, and hence the life of Oxbridge Estates Bursars would be a tad less nasty, brutish, and short.

* * *

THE Office for Students 18/19 Trac data is at OfS 2020.31 (19/6/20). It shows the HE sector in England is running at the now usual c4% annual loss/deficit of some £1.45b on an income of c£35.5b.

Research is done at a thumping loss of almost £4b, partly offset by the 40%+ profit of c£1.7b on overseas fees – exactly the same story in the USA and Australia, and for the same reason.

That reason is the poor overhead recovery on R grants/contracts – only 70% of the FEC (full economic cost) is recovered (down from the year before); with the loss varying from around 20% on R done for industry, through 25% where the Research Councils are involved and 30%+ of EU funded R, to 40% if financed by UK charities.

As we calculate the lost revenue from no-show overseas graduates and undergraduates we will soon see how much bigger the 4% deficit will become for 20/21 – assuming any cutting of the overheads relating to R activity that is underway is hard and assuming no Government bail-out of the nation’s R efforts.

And, of course, any University that has borrowed £XXXm and spent much of that on infrastructure in which to do even more loss-making R could be a tad concerned as the overseas fees income falls away while the interest due on serving the debt remains.

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REVIEWS

The Legacy of Romanticism

Simon Schama, *The Romantics and Us*. BBC Two.



A second or two into Simon Schama's three programmes *The Romantics and Us* I was yelling 'No! no! no!' at the screen, and it wasn't the last time. He was telling us that 'love of Nature' was 'the creation of the Romantics.' Nonsense. It began in Palaeolithic times. What is true is that it has taken different forms over the centuries, and has been expressed in different ways. There have been different foci. The drift of Schama's thesis was that we are inheritors of the preoccupations of the Romantic Movement, and that we are like Romantic figures. I always prefer, considering the past, to believe that whatever the similarities we are different, and that at any given cultural moment there was a way of looking at things and expressing them which was particular and unique to the time. No! no! no! I was yelling when he informed us that Shelley was a Sid Vicious character. 'We think with their minds,' says Schama. No we don't. If we make a television series it's got to be perfect, or near-perfect, and this wasn't.

There is such a lot to take issue with. He gave prominence to Blake, but he didn't have a great impact on his time, and we have exercised a pick 'n mix approach to his weird world-view. He sees, and Schama concurs, the French Revolution as, in part, a release of imaginative impulses, a protest against reason. But what about the Temples of Reason erected at the time, and the fact that the revolutionaries saw themselves as continuing the Enlightenment programme? And didn't the pursuit of reason, in any case, foster the growth of individualism and the exercise of independent mind which was central to Romanticism? No mention in the programmes of Rousseau.

He considered the part played by the poets and musicians in the fostering of Nationalism, which often evolved just as a sense of one's place was being threatened or eroded. Extraordinary that Scott was not mentioned. Schama did at least realise that Nationalism has its ugly, exclusive and aggressive side. Is there a difference between Nationalism and Patriotism? Possibly. There is a patriotism which involves love of the particular formation of willows and water-meadows, say, or certain sounds and scents, and which does not involve

flag-waving and violence. I suppose the programmes were made before the 'culture wars' controversy over the Last Night of the Proms, since there was a brief clip of him enjoying the occasion, with no great shadow of criticism hanging over it.

The programmes did not hang together terribly well. There was a line on the pursuit of the exploration of madness. Coleridge and De Quincey belong there, but not, I think, Schumann, who had madness thrust upon him. Schama was good on Chopin and the spirit of Poland, but I can't help feeling I would have enjoyed it more as part of Radio 3's *Composer of the Week*. At least there no one would be talking over the music. And why no Berlioz or Wagner? Aren't they arch-Romantics? Possibly in the construction of the programmes, and all that expensive rushing about on trains and planes, closely pursued theses were easy to lose sight of. In retrospect it makes the achievement of Kenneth Clark's *Civilisation* series all the more impressive.

There were good moments though. I particularly liked the balloons carrying incendiary messages, with Shelley's 'To a Balloon Laden with Knowledge' read in the background:

Bright ball of flame that thro the gloom of even
Silently takest thine aethereal way,
And with surpassing glory dimm'st each ray
Twinkling amid the dark blue Depths of Heaven,
Unlike the fire thou bearest, soon shall thou
Fade like a meteor in surrounding gloom,
Whilst that, unquenchable, is doomed to glow
A watch-light by the patriot's lonely tomb;
A ray of courage to the oppressed and poor,
A spark, though gleaming on the hovel's hearth,
Which, through the tyrant's gilded domes shall roar;
A beacon in the darkness of the Earth;
A sun which, o'er the renovated scene,
Shall dart like Truth where Falsehood yet has been.

There was a good crack at making visual sense of 'Kubla Khan'. No 'damsel with a dulcimer' though. Usually on television poetry and image never properly match. Here they did. The best bits were when authentic documents were performed, notably Harriet Walter reading Mary Wollstonecraft's response to street scenes in the French Revolution. Very moving. A pity there was not time to have Wordsworth's lines on the September Massacres heard. Schama emphasised the marginalisation of women in the French Revolution, but what about Madame Roland and the highly pic-

turesque figure Demoiselle Anne-Josèphe Théroigne de Méricourt, 'brown-locked, light-behaved, fire-hearted', as Carlyle describes her? There was an excellent presentation of Piranesi, and Caspar Friedrich, and an engaging look at Victor Hugo's strange visual imagination, involving a trip to Guernsey with our money. One feels that the posters of the 1968 French Revolution were a terrible aesthetic come-down after Delacroix.

I'm less keen on having Peter Doherty pop up as a talking head. Another talking head was David Attenborough, reading Wordsworth's 'The Tables Turned'. Another 'yes but' moment. Wordsworth says that we learn more morality from a 'vernal wood' than from the sages. Nonsense, surely? There's something very non-ethical about nature, and in any case in another programme woods were proposed as a source for malign German Nationalism.

I've complained about this before, but I shall do so again. From a position of considerable privilege Schama has access to manuscripts and original drawings. It enables him to throw an aura of authenticity and reliability over the narrative. It's not entirely spurious, but it's getting towards spurious. But he talks at them, and if the covid crisis has taught us one thing it is that when we talk we spit. So that Shelley manuscripts and Géricault drawings were well drenched, and not even the sacred Burns's 'Scots Wha Hae' was safe. He was handling them with greasy hands too. Hasn't the time come for all this to stop?

Still, even if infuriating sometimes, the programmes were worth watching, and Schama's seriousness and commitment make a contrast to some of the vacuous inanities broadcast. And I learnt something; I didn't know Johannes Hofer's treatise on nostalgia (1688).

* * *

As we learn from Anthony Powell's *Dance to the Music of Time* if you wait long enough things come round again. Some years ago I was giving an interview to Radio Oxford on Victorian Poetry. It was interrupted mid-way by a piece of pop-music, chosen by some computer. It was Eddi Reader of *Fairground Attraction* singing 'Perfect' (1989):

It's got to be perfect, It's got to be worth it, yeah
Too many people take second best
But I won't take anything less
It's got to be, yeah, perfect

At the end of the programme the producer asked me if there was anything I wanted to add: 'Yes there is. I'd like to offer an alternative image of perfection: Hopkins's 'The Habit of Perfection':

Elected silence, sing to me
And beat upon my whorled ear,
Pipe me to pastures still and be
The music that I care to hear.

I mentioned this at the end of my article on Hopkins and Oxford two years ago in *Oxford Magazine* (No. 392). Lo and behold, in Schama's 'Tribes' she popped up again, singing 'My love is like a red red rose' in a Scottish pub. If you want you can see Eddi Reader singing 'Perfect' on a canal-boat on the internet.

BERNARD RICHARDS

The editors invite and welcome contributions from all our readers. The content of *Oxford Magazine* relies largely on what arrives spontaneously on the editors' desk and is usually published as received.

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How to initiate Congregation actions

How to trigger a debate or discussion in Congregation

It is open to any 20 or more members of Congregation to propose a resolution or topic for discussion at a meeting of Congregation; requests must be made in writing to the Registrar not later than noon on the 22nd day before the relevant meeting. Any 2 or more members of Congregation can submit an amendment to, or announce an intention to vote against, a resolution or a legislative proposal (*i.e.* a proposal to amend the statutes). Notice must be given to the Registrar (in writing) not later than noon on the 8th day before the meeting.

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Any 2 or more members of Congregation may ask a question in Congregation about any matter concerning the policy or the administration of the University. Requests must be submitted to the Registrar (in writing) not later than noon on the 18th day before the Congregation meeting at which it is to be asked. The question and the reply (drafted by Council) will be published in *Gazette* in the week prior to the relevant meeting. The answer is also formally read out at the meeting. Supplementary questions are allowed.

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Attendance at meetings of Congregation tends to be low. Postal voting can potentially allow opinion to be easily accessed more widely across Congregation membership. Congregation can trigger a postal vote after a debate (but not after a discussion or a question and reply where no vote is taken). 25 or more members of Congregation have to be present ("on the floor") at the relevant debate. The request must be made by 4pm on the 6th day after the debate, signed by 50 members of Congregation, in writing to the Registrar. Council can also decide to hold a postal ballot, by the same deadline.

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To generate a flysheet for publication with the *Gazette*, the camera-ready copy (2 sides maximum) should be submitted with at least 10 signatures on an indemnity form (obtainable from the Registrar) by 10am on the Monday in the week in which publication is desired.

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